

signal reproduction device include, for example, detecting identifying data or the like pre-recorded with the signal that is being reproduced. Such pre-recorded data may include, but is not limited to, data identifying a television channel. Further examples of monitoring devices which may be qualified for use in accordance with the present invention include tuning meters and people meters which separately perform their respective functions.

It will be appreciated that various functions carried out by the present invention may be implemented by hardwired circuitry or software, and that such functions may also be carried out either by analog or digital techniques or a combination thereof.

Having described specific preferred embodiments of the present invention with reference to the accompanying drawings, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to those precise embodiments, and that various changes and modifications may be effected therein by one skilled in the art without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention as defined in the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of automatically qualifying a signal reproduction device located at a remote location for installation of monitoring equipment in association therewith, comprising the steps of:

automatically sensing, at said remote location, when said signal reproduction device is in use;
producing data, at said remote location, representing a usage amount of said signal reproduction device;
transmitting the data from said remote location to a centralized data processing facility; and
determining, at said centralized data processing facility, whether said signal reproduction device satisfies a predetermined qualification criterion for utilization of said monitoring equipment based upon said data representing said usage amount.

2. A method according to claim 1; wherein the step of determining comprises determining whether said data indicates usage of the signal reproduction device in excess of a predetermined minimum usage criterion.

3. A method according to claim 1; wherein the step of determining comprises determining whether said data indicates that usage of the signal reproduction device satisfies a predetermined usage pattern.

4. A method according to claim 1; further comprising the step of producing a qualification signal indicating whether said signal reproduction device satisfies said predetermined qualification criterion.

5. A method according to claim 1; further comprising storing the produced data at the remote location prior to transmitting said data.

6. A method according to claim 1; further comprising the step of removing said monitoring equipment if said signal reproduction device fails to satisfy said predetermined qualification criterion.

7. A method according to claim 1; wherein said step of sensing when said signal reproduction device is in use comprises sensing such use with a usage sensing device having a receptacle into which is plugged a power cord of said signal reproduction device.

8. A method according to claim 7; further comprising the step of transmitting said data over domestic AC power supply lines via an AC receptacle into which said usage sensing device is plugged.

9. A method according to claim 7; further comprising the step of transmitting said data over a hardwired sig-

nal path to which said usage sensing device is connected.

10. A method of automatically qualifying a signal reproduction device for installation of monitoring equipment in association therewith, comprising the steps of:

automatically sensing when said signal reproduction device is in use;
producing data representing times at which said signal reproduction device is in use; and
determining whether said signal reproduction device satisfies a predetermined qualification criterion for utilization of said monitoring equipment based upon said data representing said usage amount.

11. A method of automatically qualifying a signal reproduction device for installation of monitoring equipment in association therewith, comprising the steps of:

automatically sensing when said signal reproduction device is in use;
producing data representing times at which said signal reproduction device is in use; and
determining that said signal reproduction device is qualified for installation of monitoring equipment if said times represented by said data exceed a predetermined minimum usage threshold.

12. A method of automatically qualifying a signal reproduction device for installation of monitoring equipment in association therewith, comprising the steps of:

automatically sensing when said signal reproduction device is in use;
producing data representing a usage amount of said signal reproduction device;
determining whether said signal reproduction device satisfies a predetermined qualification criterion for utilization of said monitoring equipment based upon said data representing said usage amount; and
installing, in association with said signal reproduction device, monitoring equipment including means for monitoring at least one of a source of a signal reproduced by said signal reproduction device and the audience using said signal reproduction device, only if said signal reproduction device satisfies said predetermined qualification criterion.

13. A method according to claim 12; wherein the step of installing monitoring equipment comprises installing said monitoring equipment for monitoring usage of a television receiver.

14. A system for automatically qualifying a signal reproduction device located at a remote location for installation of monitoring equipment in association therewith, comprising:

a usage sensing device installed in association with said signal reproduction device at said remote location for automatically sensing when said signal reproduction device is in use;
means for producing data representing a usage amount of said signal reproduction device;
a centralized data processing facility for determining whether said signal reproduction device satisfies a predetermined qualification criterion for utilization of said monitoring equipment based upon said data representing said usage amount; and
means for transmitting the data from said remote location to the centralized data processing facility.

15. A system according to claim 14; wherein said means for determining comprises means for determining